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ON ROBERT STONE AND TIM O'BRIEN: AMERICAN FICTION OF THE VIETNAM WAR WITHIN AND BEYOND

论罗伯特·斯通和梯姆·奥布莱恩有关越南战争的小说

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Ph. D. Dissertation

**ON ROBERT STONE AND TIM O'BRIEN:
AMERICAN FICTION OF THE VIETNAM WAR
WITHIN AND BEYOND**

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**On Robert Stone and Tim O'Brien:
American Fiction of the Vietnam War Within and Beyond**

“We can truly be transformed, and even possibly redeemed, by electing to write at times of what happened—but also of what might have happened, what could have happened, what should have happened, and also what can be kept from happening or what can be made to happen....Words are all we have.”

—Philip D. Beidler (*Re-Writing America*)

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Abstract

A new literary genre—American Vietnam War literature has steadfastly found its way into American literature since the early 1970s. The genre mainly consists of poetry, drama, fiction and memoirs. Writers of this genre take the Vietnam War and other aspects concerning the war as subject matters and themes of their works. They not only describe the Vietnam War itself, American society before and during the Vietnam War, but also depict America after the war as well as the great effect of the war upon many spectra of American society. Their achievements in thematic and artistic representations are gaining more and more attraction from scholars both in the United States and in China.

In this genre fictional works are undoubtedly more important than the other three kinds in number and in artistic achievement. The novels written by Michael Herr, Philip Caputo, Larry Heinemann, Robert Stone, Tim O'Brien and some other novelists are among the classics of American literature. Out of the writers, Robert Stone and Tim O'Brien are the most outstanding in the depth and width of their thematic creation. Meanwhile, their different writing styles—Stone's neorealism and O'Brien's postmodernism in the main embody the two major narrative devices of contemporary American fiction.

So far, Robert Stone and Tim O'Brien have been regarded as two famous American novelists. American scholars have written quite a few articles on the novels written by Stone and O'Brien, particularly on their masterpieces—Stone's *Dog Soldiers*, O'Brien's *Going After Cacciato* and *The Things They Carried*. But it seems that the scholars have been showing major concern with the themes of Stone's *A Hall of Mirrors* and *A Flag for Sunrise* as well as *Dog Soldiers*, and they have seldom touched upon *Dog Soldiers*'s and other novels' writing techniques as a whole. In contrast, the scholars have mostly analyzed the postmodernist techniques of O'Brien's two masterpieces but have seldom mentioned the themes of the above two and other novels. Furthermore, the scholars have seldom conducted an overall study of Stone and O'Brien, and even not made a comparative study of their works. In China, the number of articles about the two writers' novels is much less than that in the United States. The method and field of research of the Chinese scholars almost bear the resemblance to those of the American scholars.

This dissertation—**ON ROBERT STONE AND TIM O'BRIEN: AMERICAN FICTION OF THE VIETNAM WAR WITHIN AND BEYOND** for the first time makes a rather systematic and comparative study of the novels of the Vietnam War written by Robert Stone and Tim O'Brien. The study focuses on the comparison and contrast of most of their works in themes and artistic techniques so as to define the general characteristics of Vietnam War literature as well as the idiosyncrasies of the two writers.

The dissertation falls into six parts.

The **Introduction** gives an overall picture of American Vietnam War literature and the present status of research into the genre both in the United States and in China.

Then, it narrows down to the introduction to Robert Stone and Tim O'Brien. The dissertation primarily points out that the two writers not only depict American society before and during the Vietnam War, but also portray America after the war, particularly the effect of the war imposed upon America, upon American psyche, society, politics, culture and life. Furthermore, the United States in their works is delineated to be identical in several aspects with Viet Nam in the Vietnam War and the war itself through the comparison of their internal similar elements. Stone and O'Brien in the main employ neorealistic and postmodernist techniques respectively in order to effectively convey those themes. With regard to the fact that the study of American Vietnam War literature is slow and insufficient in China, including the study of Stone and O'Brien of course, the dissertation attempts to introduce the Chinese readers to such an important literary genre, and more important, to let them gain a panoramic view of most of the works written by Stone and O'Brien.

Chapter One is entitled "Within the Vietnam War". It focuses on the description of American society before and during the Vietnam War and the war itself in the novels by Stone and O'Brien. It also discusses a classical theme in all American war novels—"separate peace". The chapter consists of two sections. The first section argues that Stone and O'Brien realistically convey the turbulent and chaotic American society greatly brought about by the Vietnam War. Such a phenomenon is historically termed "the Vietnam Syndrome". The unjust war launched by the American government caused the uniform denunciation by the American people from all walks of life. Manifold tides of anti-war movements from the early 1960s to the 1970s swept through the whole nation. Stone and O'Brien describe in details the overriding manifestations of the anti-war movements: The civil-rights movement, the women's movement, the Counterculture and the New Left.

The second section under the title of "The War in Viet Nam" mainly touches upon the traditional and postmodernist characteristics of the Vietnam War, and a traditional theme in American war fiction—"separate peace". The novels written by Stone and O'Brien vividly describe the two major traditional features of the Vietnam War—brutality and absurdity. Some American soldiers not only cruelly kill the Vietnamese people at random and amputate the dead bodies, but also absurdly shoot at leaves or animals or even at nothing. In addition, the two writers depict in details the postmodernist characteristics of the Vietnam War—indeterminacy, including that of the front line, of the purpose of the war, of the American soldiers' enemies, of the war's tactics, and of topography of the battlefield and so on.

The theme of "separate peace" (A soldier's decision to fight or to depart intentionally from the war for personal reasons) has frequently been discussed by the previous American war writers. But Stone and O'Brien have incorporated new meanings into such a theme on the basis of the postmodernist characteristics of the Vietnam War. Some American soldiers refuse to go to the Vietnam War because they do not think that such a meaningless war is worth fighting (such as Cowling in O'Brien's *The Nuclear Age*). Some American soldiers on the battlefield compare the absurd nature of the Vietnam War with that of existentialism and finally run away from the war (such as Hicks and Converse in Stone's *Dog Soldiers*). Other soldiers on

the battlefield meditate upon the morality and immorality of the war from the philosophical perspective (such as the soldier O'Brien in *If I Die in a Combat Zone* and *The Things They Carried*). All those greatly distinguish Stone and O'Brien from the previous war writers and even from some of their contemporaries.

Chapter Two "Beyond the Vietnam War", elaborates on the effect of the war upon American psyche; the identifications of Viet Nam in the war with the United States in the spectra of politics, culture and life, and with an imaginary country in Central America; the identification of the Vietnam War with the war of life. The chapter is made up of four sections.

The first section reflects the immense effect of the war on American psychology. The war not only renders the American war veterans traumatic, but also makes the American people contagious of trauma. This kind of trauma is called the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The three primary symptoms of the trauma are: Reexperiencing traumatic events, avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and increased arousal. Although the veterans have tried every means to eliminate their trauma, it still haunts them.

Entitled "From Viet Nam to the U.S.A.", the second section identifies Viet Nam in the Vietnam War with America and the war with the nuclear age in America. Like what the American soldiers have seen in Viet Nam in the war, American society is also replete with murder and corruption. Disoriented in the cruel and absurd war as well as in the corrupted America during and after the war, the American soldiers become mad at killing the innocent Vietnamese on the battlefield and addicted to drug smuggling after they go home. Even worse, they take drugs to their country, and continue their drug smuggling at the cost of their lives. Similarly, many American people at home, including some officials, feeling displaced and disillusioned by the chaotic and corrupted America, take to drugs and drug smuggling. Drug addiction and drug smuggling seem to have become a legal and even a governmental sanction both in Viet Nam and in America. In short, what the American soldiers are confronted with in Viet Nam is identical with that witnessed by the American people at home. This is represented in Stone's *Dog Soldiers*. From a different point of view in his *The Nuclear Age*, O'Brien compares the Vietnam War with the nuclear age of the United States. What has happened to the American people at home makes them reminiscent of what happened to the American soldiers in the Vietnam War. Both cases are the same. Specifically, the American soldiers' military training for the Vietnam War is much the same as the American terrorists' military training at home. The comparison further demonstrates the inhumanity and unjustness, as well as the cruelty and absurdity of the Vietnam War and American society.

The third section is devoted to Stone's *A Flag for Sunrise*. The theme of the novel is the identification of Viet Nam with an imagined country in Central America. Based upon his experience in the Vietnam War, Stone conveniently fictionalizes a country called Tecan which, like Viet Nam, becomes a testing ground of America's advanced military technology. Moreover, the underlying purpose of the American military intervention in the two countries is to impose on them its political and cultural hegemony, through the political, military and cultural support of the

counter-revolutionary and corrupted governments of the two countries. Stone's artistic but prophetic creation is forcefully justified by what the American government did to Central America in the 1980s—the intervention in Nicaragua.

The last section peruses O'Brien's last novel *Tomcat in Love*. O'Brien philosophically juxtaposes the Vietnam War with the war of life. Not only does the novel depict the aftermath of the war upon an American veteran, it also compares the veteran's attitude toward the war to a civilian's attitude toward life, therein abstracting the truth that life is like a war; life is hard just as a war is hard; people have to struggle against life so as to live well just as a soldier has to fight against a war for the purpose of surviving and winning it. In broader sense, a man has to learn how to cope with unhappy things in the past war or in the past life so as to construct the future well. This is philosophically true.

The last two chapters detail the two writers' aesthetic characteristics. **Chapter Three** "From Neorealism to Postmodernism" approaches Stone's aesthetic tendency in fictional writing. Like some other neorealistic writers in the postmodern context, Stone has been combining traditional realistic techniques with some modernist and even postmodernist techniques, including objective and linear description of the real world, philosophical naturalism, symbolism, ambiguity, mythological and biblical reconstruction. Put in details, Stone basically keeps some characteristics of traditional realism, such as the completeness of plots, the unified personality of characters and chronological narration. He also describes in existentialist sense American society full of murder, violence and other kinds of evil forces. In that society the characters are always powerless and become the victims of evils one way or another. Meanwhile, Stone gives the places, the characters and their behavior symbolic implications, making his novels more substantial in theme. Moreover, he makes his characters ambiguous and ambivalent in personality, and tries to reconstruct a biblical archetype by modeling Hicks in *Dog Soldiers* on Jesus Christ so as to save America and the American people from evils.

In addition, Stone has also been employing some postmodernist subject matters and techniques, such as popular culture, deconstruction, surrealism and metafiction in some of his novels. *Dog Soldiers* and *Children of Light* respectively touch upon some constituents of popular culture, such as drug addiction and drug smuggling, and the Hollywood film industry. The theme of postmodernist deconstruction concerning the characterization of characters is shared by most of Stone's novels, such as *A Flag for Sunrise*, and *A Hall of Mirrors* as well as the above-mentioned. Surrealism mainly referring to the description of dreams is embodied in *Outerbridge Reach* and *A Flag for Sunrise*, in which the characters are sometimes in a state of the blurring of reality and dream. Fragmented narration, as one of the metafictional characteristics, is found in *A Flag for Sunrise* in which one plot is often interrupted by another.

Chapter Four "From Postmodernism to New Historicism" goes to the discussion of O'Brien's aesthetic writing principles. O'Brien has used postmodernist techniques in almost all his novels. As the main writing device of postmodernism, metafiction has the following major characteristics: the combination of narration and comment, open endings, parody, fragmented collage, random sequences of time and

space, blurring of reality and fiction and anti-genre and so on. All these elements are widely used by O'Brien. The narrator in *The Things They Carried* tells the reader how to tell a true war story; the author cannot give a satisfactory answer but give several ones to the two characters' disappearances at the end of *In the Lake of the Woods*; the character in *Going After Cacciato* imitates the author in writing stories, just to show that even the author's imagination is limited; O'Brien in an interview says that the soldier "Tim O'Brien" in *The Things They Carried* is both himself and someone else; O'Brien's *If I Die in a Combat Zone* is a typical book of anti-genre because it is called either an autobiography or a memoir, or a novel. Therefore, O'Brien is called one of the most classical postmodernist American writers.

In addition, in *In the Lake of the Woods* and *The Vietnam in Me* O'Brien keeps meditating upon the historical truth of the most sensational and notorious event in the Vietnam War—the My Lai Massacre from the new historical viewpoint. New historicism puts a high premium on something behind the text—the unwritten history, the present written history and ideology behind it. O'Brien for the first time creatively employs new historical approach to create another kind of truth in his fiction so as to bring to light the fictional truth of the My Lai Massacre in historical narratives. That is, the massacre is called an "aberration" in American history, but O'Brien argues that it is an "atrocities" by combining historical facts and his fictional creation.

The **Conclusion** summarizes the dissertation by arguing that Stone and O'Brien are the most outstanding American Vietnam War writers in contemporary American literature. Particularly, compared with his artistic achievement, Stone's thematic representations of the Vietnam War, American society as well as some other aspects beyond America are more important. This makes his novels standing among the most classical ones in American literature. Nevertheless, O'Brien's greatest contribution to American literature lies in his fictional writing, particularly his metafictional writing rather than his thematic expression, although it is also very creative and substantial. Then, the author of this dissertation hopes that such pioneering and experimental study of Stone and O'Brien will pave the way for further research on the two writers and American Vietnam War literature as well in China.

Key Words: Vietnam Syndrome, separate peace, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, neorealism, postmodernism, metafiction, new historicism

摘 要

20 世纪 70 年代初期,美国文学中出现了一种新类型——越南战争文学。美国越南战争文学主要包括诗歌、戏剧、小说和回忆录等。美国越战作家把越南战争和与越南战争有关的其它因素作为他们作品的题材和主题。他们不仅描写越南战争本身,描写越南战争之前和越南战争期间的美国社会现实,而且再现战后的美国现实和战争给美国社会各层面带来的深刻影响。他们在主题表达和艺术创作方面所取得的成就正在引起美国和中国学者越来越多的关注。

在美国越战文学中,无论从数量还是艺术成就讲,小说无疑是其中最重要的部分。迈克尔·赫尔、菲力普·卡普托、拉里·海涅曼、罗伯特·斯通、梯姆·奥布莱恩和其他小说家的小说已成为美国文学中的经典之作。其中,拉里·海涅曼、罗伯特·斯通和梯姆·奥布莱恩最为优秀,因为他们作品主题的深度和广度几乎超过了其它所有的小说。同时,他们三个人的艺术特色各有千秋。尤其是罗伯特·斯通的新现实主义和梯姆·奥布莱恩的后现代主义的创作手法基本上代表了当代美国小说创作的两大模式。

目前,斯通和奥布莱恩已被公认为美国优秀的小说家。美国学者已写了很多关于罗伯特·斯通和梯姆·奥布莱恩的评论文章。但这些文章主要集中讨论他们的代表作——斯通的《狗士兵》以及奥布莱恩的《追寻卡西亚托》和《他们携带的东西》。他们在研究这两位作家时表现了两种截然不同的倾向。大部分学者偏重于分析斯通的主要小说的主题思想,如《狗士兵》、《镜厅》和《日出的旗子》,而极少谈论小说的写作技巧。对奥布莱恩的研究情形则刚好相反。奥布莱恩上述小说的艺术特色成为学者们阐释的焦点,而小说的主题内容鲜有人问津。此外,系统、整体研究上述两位作家的专著较少,将他们进行对比研究的论文或专著至今未见。受国外对罗伯特·斯通和梯姆·奥布莱恩的整体研究现状的影响,中国学者在这方面做得更少。他们仅限于评介斯通的《狗士兵》、奥布莱恩的《追寻卡西亚托》和《他们携带的东西》。他们的研究方法也基本上跟美国学者相似。

这篇学位论文——“论罗伯特·斯通和梯姆·奥布莱恩有关越南战争的小说”第一次对罗伯特·斯通和梯姆·奥布莱恩有关越南战争的小说进行相当系统的比较研究。该项研究主要从主题和艺术形式两方面比较斯通和奥布莱恩小说的异同点,既展示美国越南战争文学的总体特征,又揭示他们作品的独特个性。

本论文分六个部分。

引言概述了美国越战文学的整体情况以及美国文学界和中国文学界对这一文学类型的研究现状。然后,集中介绍罗伯特·斯通和梯姆·奥布莱恩。论文着重指出,斯通和奥布莱恩不仅形象地描述了战争之前和战争期间的美国,而且描述了战后的美国,特别是战争对美国的心理、社会、政治、文化和生活带来的巨大影响。不仅如此,这两个作家将美国、越南战争中的越南和越南战争放在同一层面进行比较,得出它们三者的类似性这一结论。为了有效地表达上述主题,斯通和奥布莱恩分别主要利用新现实主义和后现代主义两大创作手法。由于中国学者对美国越南战争文学的研究,包括对斯通和奥布莱恩的研究相当不足,更谈不上把越南战争文学引进课堂。因此本论文所做的初始性和尝试性的研究旨在让中国读者熟悉这一重要文学类型,并了解其概貌,更重要地是了解上述两位作家的作品。

第一章“越南战争”集中讨论斯通和奥布莱恩笔下越南战争前和越南战争中

的美国社会以及越南战争本身的特征,并讨论美国战争小说的经典主题之一——“单独媾和”。本章共分两节。第一节认为,斯通和奥布莱恩真实地再现了动荡和混乱的美国社会现实。它在很大程度上讲是由越南战争造成的。这种特殊的社会现象在美国历史上被称为“越南综合症”。这场不正义的越南战争激起了美国各阶层人民的一致反对。20世纪60年代初期至整个70年代,各种反战运动席卷整个美国。斯通和奥布莱恩的小说十分现实地反映了各种反战运动中的最强音——民权运动、女权运动、反文化运动和新左派运动等。

第二节分析斯通和奥布莱恩小说中越南战争的特点和美国战争小说的经典主题——“单独媾和”。首先,他们形象地再现了越南战争两大传统特点——残酷和荒诞。一些美国士兵不仅残酷地杀害无辜的越南人民,肢解死者的尸体,而且有时漫无目的地扫射四周的树木或动物,甚至无任何目标地射击。不仅如此,斯通和奥布莱恩还对越南战争的后现代主义特征——不确定性表示足够的关注。他们将越南战争的不确定性归结为:战场前线的不确定性、美国发动战争的目的、美国士兵的敌人、美国的战争策略、以及战场的地形的不确定性等。

“单独媾和(出于个人原因,士兵必须在留下作战和逃离战场之间作出抉择)”是美国所有战争小说反复探讨的主题。斯通和奥布莱恩不但继承了这一主题,而且赋予它新的内涵。越南战争的后现代主义特征使他们笔下的美国士兵重新审视“单独媾和”。有些士兵推迟服役或拒绝上战场,因为他们认为根本不值得去为这场无意义的战争送命(如奥布莱恩《核时代》中的主人公考宁)。有的士兵把越战与存在主义相提并论,突出它们共有的本质——荒诞(如斯通《狗士兵》的主人公希克斯和康弗斯)。还有的士兵从哲学角度讨论战争的道德性和非道德性(如奥布莱恩《如果我死在战场》和《他们携带的东西》的主人公“我”)。所有这些使得斯通和奥布莱恩既不同于他们以前的战争作家,又不同于他们同时代的作家。

第二章详细讨论“对越南战争的超越”的主题。它包含四个子主题:战争对美国社会的影响;战争中的越南和越南战争跟美国的相似性;战争中的越南跟虚构的一个中美洲国家的等同以及越南战争与战争一样的人生的等同。

第一节再现战争对美国心理的影响。战争不仅给美国士兵带来极大的创伤,而且也深深地伤害了美国国内的人民。这种创伤被称为“创伤后综合症”。它的三个主要症状是:创伤经历的反复出现,逃避令人联想到创伤经历的事件以及过度的焦虑和警觉。战后几乎所有的美国士兵都染上“创伤后综合症”。虽然他们采取各种办法试图消除这些症状,但它们一直陪伴他们终生。

第二节“从越南到美国”把战争中的越南和美国、越南战争和美国的核时代视为等同。美国士兵看到战争中的越南充满了谋杀和腐败,而美国社会也是如此。面对残酷而荒诞的战争,面对腐败的美国现实,美国士兵无法找到自我。他们要么在战场上疯狂杀害无辜的越南人民,要么回国后吸毒成瘾。更有甚者,他们把毒品从越南带回美国,冒着生命危险继续从事贩毒活动。同样,许多美国公民,甚至政府官员也在吸毒和贩毒。无论在越南还是在美国,吸毒和贩毒似乎变成合法的行为。总之,美国士兵和美国民众的所见和所为有着惊人的相似之处。这集中体现在斯通的《狗士兵》里。奥布莱恩在《核时代》中从另一角度将越南战争和美国的核时代相提并论。20世纪后半叶,美国人民目睹了多次局部战争,如朝鲜战争等。战争给他们带来的恐惧令他们想起美国士兵在越南战争中的经历。二者也有相似点。特别是美国士兵奔赴越南战场前的军训方法跟美国国内恐怖主义分子的军训方法如出一辙。这种对比分析进一步证明越南战争和美国社会的非

正义性、非人性、残酷性和荒诞性的本质。

第三节专门阐述斯通的小说《日出的旗子》。小说作者将战争中的越南与他想象中的中美洲的某个国家完全等同起来。凭着自己在越南战争中的经历以及敏锐的洞察力和想象力，他虚构了一个叫“田肯”的国家，并将它描述为美国先进武器的实验场。然后进一步指出，美国政府从政治、军事和文化三方面支持越南和田肯的反动政府，其根本目的就是要在第三世界国家实施它的政治霸权和文化霸权。斯通具有预见性的艺术创作显示了很强的真实性，因为它在 20 世纪 80 年代得到强有力的证明：美国入侵中美洲的尼加拉瓜。

第四节讨论奥布莱恩的最后一部小说《恋爱中的汤姆克特》。小说从哲学层面认为越南战争和战争般的生活具有许多类似之处。它既描写越南战争对美国士兵的影响，又将士兵对战争的态度和一般人对生活的态度进行比较，从而得出如下真理：即生活就是一场战斗，生活跟战争一样艰苦。为了好好地活着，人们必须与生活作斗争，就像士兵为了活下来并赢得战争的胜利而必须努力作战。从更广泛的意义上讲，为了好好地珍惜现在和构想未来，不论是退伍的士兵还是一般百姓，都必须学会恰当地处理战争中或过去生活中的不愉快的事情。这是千古不变的真理。

最后两章剖析斯通和奥布莱恩的美学创作特征。

第三章“从新现实主义到后现代主义” 阐释斯通小说的美学倾向。跟后现代语境下的其他新现实主义作家一样，斯通将传统的现实主义、现代主义、甚至后现代主义的某些创作手法结合起来，形成一种新的现实主义——新现实主义。也即是说，它将现实主义中对现实世界的客观描述和现代主义中哲学上的自然主义（也称新自然主义）、象征和含混以及对神话和宗教原型的重构等技巧有机地融合起来。具体地说，斯通既保留了传统现实主义手法的某些特征，如情节和人物个性的完整性，又从存在主义的角度描写了一个充满暴力和谋杀的社会。在那个社会里人们往往成为罪恶力量的牺牲品。同时，斯通又赋予他作品中的地点、人物的名字和行为象征含义，使小说主题意义更丰富。再者，他作品中的某些主人公具有双重人格，读者似乎不能用一种道德标准去评判他们。最后，斯通还试图在《狗士兵》中将主人公希克斯塑造成一个当代的基督耶稣，以拯救美国和美国人民。

此外，斯通一直在尝试使用一些后现代主义题材和技巧，如通俗文化、解构、超现实主义和元小说等。《狗士兵》和《光明的孩子》表现了通俗文化的题材，如吸毒和贩毒以及好莱坞电影业等。斯通小说中的大部分人物性格都从确定性走向不确定性，走向自我解构。超现实主义主要是指对梦境的描写，这在《外桥地带》和《日出的旗子》中得到反映。其中的人物有时混淆了真实和梦境的界限。

《日出的旗子》的一大写作特征是碎片式的叙述，即一个情节经常被另一个情节打断。这是后现代主义的主要特征——元小说的表征之一。

第四章“从后现代主义走向新历史主义” 分析奥布莱恩的美学创作取向。与斯通不同，奥布莱恩几乎从第一部小说开始就使用后现代主义，主要是元小说的创作手法。元小说是关于小说的小说。它用小说的形式揭示小说的虚构本质。概括起来，元小说有以下主要特征：叙述和评论相结合、开放式的结尾、反讽、碎片化的拼贴、混乱的时空组合、现实和虚构界限的模糊和反体裁等。所有这些都 在奥布莱恩的作品中得到充分的体现。如《他们携带的东西》的主人公告诉读者如何讲述一个真实的战争故事，并向读者叙述他创作该小说的过程；作者在《林中之湖》的结尾无法为两位主人公的消失给出一个满意的答案，而只能提出多种

可能性以供读者选择；《追寻卡西亚托》的主人公模仿作者叙述故事，旨在说明即使是作者的想象力也是有限的；奥布莱恩本人在一次访谈中说，《他们携带的东西》中的“梯姆·奥布莱恩”既是作者本人，但又不是他本人；《如果我死在战场》既被认为是一部回忆录，又被认为是一部小说，即它包含虚构的成份。正因为如此，奥布莱恩被誉为美国当代最著名的后现代主义小说家之一。

另一方面，奥布莱恩在《林中之湖》和《我心中的越南》中坚持用新历史主义的观点思考越南战争中最引人注目的事件——“美莱大屠杀”的历史真相。新历史主义主要关注文本背后被埋没的东西，即未被书写的历史、现存历史文本及其背后的意识形态。像处理其它历史事件的新历史主义作家一样，奥布莱恩第一次创造性地利用新历史主义的表现手法，通过小说创造了另一种真实，揭露越南战争中有关“美莱大屠杀”的历史叙述的虚构本质。换言之，美国历史认为“美莱大屠杀”是一个“失误”，但奥布莱恩把历史事件和虚构相结合考虑，认为它是一个“暴行”。

结论部分重申，斯通和奥布莱恩既是美国越战作家中最杰出的代表人物，也是美国当代作家中的佼佼者。特别是，就斯通而言，他小说的主题思想，即将越南战争和多层面的美国社会以及美国以外的国家结合起来进行思考比他的新现实主义手法更突出。这使他的小说成为美国文学中的经典作品。而奥布莱恩相反，他的后现代主义写作技巧，如怎样讲故事和利用元小说全方位地描述越南战争比他的主题创作的成就更高。当然，他们分别在艺术手法和主题表征方面也取得相当大的成功。最后，本论文作者希望，这项开拓性的研究必将增进中国学者对斯通和奥布莱恩的越战小说的深入研究，并促进中国学者和读者对整个美国越南战争文学的进一步了解。

关键词：越南综合症，单独媾和，创伤后综合症，新现实主义，后现代主义，元小说，新历史主义

Introduction

1. American Vietnam War Literature in the 20th Century

(1) Descriptions of the Vietnam War in Different Genres

Wars are the combination of destruction and creation. Wars can destroy everything, but can also create great literature in that writers can with their pens write their reflections upon and gain new insights into the wars themselves and human nature. The Trojan War gave birth to Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Napoleonic Wars fostered Lev Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, and the First World War elicited Erich. M. Remarque's *All is Quiet on the Western Front*, just to name a few. These classical works were, are and will be adored by generation after generation. So it is with American war literature.

Wars have made great contributions to American literature. American Civil War and two World Wars have made a large number of men of letters great novelists. So it is safe to say that literary works with war as subject matter can be classified and approached as an independent genre. Similarly, American Vietnam War¹ has greatly helped the prosperity of American literature because it has produced many famous writers, some of whom are even among the greatest ones in contemporary American literature.

Vietnam War literature, as the famous American critic Philip Beidler defines in his *Re-Writing America*, refers to a body of literature re-writing Americans and American life, history and culture through mainly dealing with the experiences, the memories and the aftermath of the Vietnam War.² It chiefly comprises novels, poems, plays, memoirs and (auto) biographies, documentaries, journalistic reports, films abridged from novels, books with pictures and other genres such as letters and diaries. They are, one way or other, "our most important chroniclers of American life in the last quarter of the twentieth century—at the end of empire and at the beginning of postmodern America".³ Among these genres the literary achievements in fictional writings stand the highest and are elaborated upon most so far.

Novelists in this genre are many. Tim O'Brien, Robert Stone, Larry Heinemann, Michael Herr, Philip Caputo, James Webb, John Del Vecchio, Stephen Wright, Ward Just, David Halberstam, Robert Butler, Winston Groom, Gloria Emerson, Frances Fitzgerald and William Broyles are more famous than others; the first three are National Book Award winners for their profound thematic representation and highly artistic techniques.

Poets such as John Balaban, W. D. Ehrhart, David Huddle, Yusef Komunyakaa, Walker McDonald, and Bruce Weigl as well as Allen Ginsberg have also made great achievements in American poetry. Some of them have become major voices in fiction, autobiography and criticism as well. The playwrights David Rabe, Sam Shepard and David Mamet stand among the dominant figures of their generation of dramatists.

In addition to Ron Kovic, Tim O'Brien and Philip Caputo also write memoirs.

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